

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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DRC-01 /194 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1736

INFO USCINCSO

DIA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VE

SUBJ: PRESIDENT CALDERA DEFENDS ARREST OF PEREZ JIMENISTAS

REF: CARACAS 9425

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT CALDERA HAS CALLED FOR MODERATION IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND ALSO JUSTIFIED RECENT ARRESTS OF LEADING PEREZJIMENISTAS FOR CONSPIRACY TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS IN ORDER TO COUNTER WIDE-SPREAD CRITICISM THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD OVERREACTED AGAINST THE PEREZ-

JIMENISTAS. END SUMMARY

1. IN HIS WEEKLY PRESS CONFERENCE HELD NOVEMBER 8 PRESIDENT CALDERA COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON THE NATIONAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, CALLING UPON ALL POLITICAL PARTIES "NOT TO EXCEED THE LIMITS OF MODERATION." CALDERA DESCRIBED HIS ADMINISTRATION AS "TOLERANT, RESPECTFUL AND MODERATE" TOWARD THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF ALL PARTIES AND PRAISED THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELABORATE SAFEGUARDS BUILT INTO THE VENEZUELAN SYSTEM OF VOTING.

"IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THERE TO BE ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WHERE THE GUARANTEES FOR THE VOTER ARE AS GREAT AS IN VENEZUELA," CALDERA DECLARED.

2. REFERRING TO THE RECENT ARRESTS OF PEREZJIMENISTAS FOR CALLING THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS FRAUDULENT AND DEMANDING HIS RESIGNATION (REPORTED REFTTEL), CALDERA STATED THAT THESE ACTIONS WERE DISRESPECTFUL OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY AS WELL AS OF THE SUPREME COURT, CONGRESS AND OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES, CALDERA ASSERTED THAT "THERE IS LIBERTY AND GUARANTEES FOR EVERYONE AND WE HAVE AMPLY DEMONSTRATED THAT BUT AGAINST THOSE WHO TRY TO MAKE USE OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS TO NEGATE THE FACT OF THE ELECTION OR ITS RESULTS WE MUST APPLY THE ABUNDANT NORMS WHICH EXIST IN OUR LAWS." CALDERA THEN ANALYZED AT LENGTH THE PEREZJIMENISTA VOTE IN THE 1968 ELECTIONS, AND DENIED THAT THE PEREZJIMENISTAS HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO VOTE FOR HIM AT THAT TIME.

3. PRESIDENT CALDERA CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY REAFFIRMING THAT VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY "EXISTS FOR THOSE WHO WIN AND FOR THOSE WHO LOSE."

4. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CRACKDOWN ON THE PEREZJIMENISTAS WAS ON CALDERA'S DIRECT ORDERS, AND REFLECTS HIS EXTREME PERSONAL SENSITIVITY TO THE DIGNITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. NEVERTHELESS THE CRACKDOWN HAS BEEN WIDELY VIEWED HERE AS OVERREACTION ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND HAS PROVOKED MUCH CRITICISM NOT ONLY FROM THE PEREZJIMENISTA PARTIES BUT ALSO FROM AD, MEP, MAS AND ESPECIALLY THE URD, WHICH ARE SCRAMBLING TO PICK UP CHUNKS OF THE BADLY SPLINTERED PEREZJIMENISTA VOTE. CALDERA'S UNUSUALLY FULSOME PRAISE OF THE VENEZUELAN DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND JUSTIFICATION FOR HIS ACTIONS VIS-A-VIS THE PEREZJIMENISTAS TO PROTECT THIS PROCESS THUS CONSTITUTE HIS REPLY TO CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LATE HAS BEEN ACTING IN AN UNNECESSARILY REPRESSIVE FASHION.

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